

westernliving

HOMES & DESIGN • TRAVEL • FOOD & WINE • THE WEST

KOOTENAYS GEM
Is This The Hippest
Hotel In The West?

**A MEAL WITH
YOUR WINE**
Four Great Bottles,
Four Great Dishes

**LAST WE TAKE
MANHATTAN**
A Prairie Bookseller
Invades New York

**You Must Be
DREAMING**

SPECIAL ISSUE
Homes Across The West
Where Fantasy Meets Reality

PM 40064924 Price \$3.95



dows. Wong takes delight in stunning people by pulling back a Japanese noren curtain layered with Tibetan temple flags to reveal the vista. The fabric screen in the doorway was Chan's idea, says Wong: "He told me I had to create some mystery." Chan adds, "Harry wanted to blow everyone away right from the door, and I wanted to slow it down."

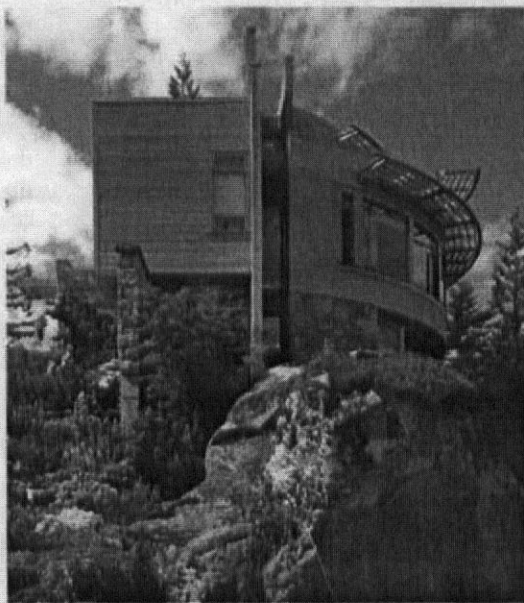
Wong next turns up the surround sound stereo system, blasting an operatic love song, and offers me a choice of the world's finest teas, any variety I like from anywhere in the world. For this man everything is about maximum pleasure. "Harry has a real love for life," says Chan, who is watching from the back of the room. "He's... flamboyant," he adds as we look over to see Wong practising his golf swing in the minimally furnished room, sending an imaginary ball out toward the Sound's Defense Islands.

When not working on his swing, Wong uses one side of the crescent-shaped room to practise tai chi or play piano. Here the floor is raised to create a more intimate space. Opposite the windows and behind a Japanese-style room divider, there is a basic meal preparation area, Chan explains. "Harry didn't want a kitchen." Overhearing this, Wong chimes in, "I don't like food. I don't like the smell in my house. I don't like oil." He flashes an expression of disgust to emphasize his stand.

This is the Harry Wong some Vancouverites will remember from his brief time as a restaurateur. In the late '90s the neighbourhood noodle house Mulan opened in Vancouver's West End to serve extremely affordable and health-conscious Chinese food in a quiet, subdued environment. The proprietor was this quirky older man who used to wander from table to table chatting. He would make you guess his age before explaining that he was the man who introduced instant noodles to China, which is why the restaurant was so cheap—he didn't need to make any more money. Mulan was a hobby, a way to meet people. (You were never sure whether to believe him. What are the chances of meeting the man who made instant noodles big in China in such a modest restaurant?) The

eccentric man would point out the ink paintings on the wall; they were by his wife. The people who came to the restaurant were his friends. The food was the kind he liked: lots of steamed fish and vegetables, noodle soup without oil. The things to stay away from in life were oil, stress and anger. Tai chi was the secret to a long life, that and tea. "Look at me. I am almost 80, and next week I'll be shopping in Milan. You see this jacket? I bought this in Paris." And you couldn't deny that the jacket had style—Wong's look is classic and dapper.

"I made Mulan alive," he says about the restaurant that he eventually chose to close,



but not before taking 24 of his regular customers on a tour of China. Now photos of the dishes (the full menu in pictures) hang in Wong's basement, and his wife's brush paintings are on display in the only Chinese-style room in the house.

In fact Western influences have always played a part in Wong's life. He was born on a tiny island, Kulangsu, which is near Xiamen. "There were no bicycles, no cars," he explains, but there were chandeliers and bathtubs since it was an international settlement, under the foreign rule of Great Britain. Wong studied chemistry and was made head of research at a giant food corporation where his father was a chairman. He left for other high-profile jobs before deciding to launch his own food manufacturing company. Besides the mega-success of Doll noodles, he also developed a method for growing bean

Patent pending - Solid gold filled and precious stones - Copyright - All rights reserved - www.pandora-jewelry.com - For a list of stores in your area contact: Peggy at attp021@attglobal.net

A charm for every story

PANDORA
Jewelry